

VALE opposes the proposal by the live export industry to dilute regulation of animal welfare standards

Open letter from Vets Against Live Export to Alison Penfold, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC)

“Dear Ms Penfold

I write on behalf of Vets Against Live Export (VALE) concerning proposals by the live export industry to change the standards governing the welfare of animals exported from Australia (Livestock Global Assurance Program; LGAP). I note that you have expressed the opinion that you would welcome a submission on this matter from VALE.

As a preliminary matter, I note that the form which you have posted on the relevant website is entirely prescriptive, requiring comment on defined paragraphs of LGAP. VALE is not interested in making a submission in this prescriptive fashion.

The substantive point, so far as VALE is concerned, is that it is a fundamental principle of animal welfare that animals used for food should be slaughtered as close to their source as possible. Live export of animals from Australia by sea is evidently inconsistent with this principle, particularly where animals are transported aboard ships for long durations, in overcrowded conditions, exposed to extremes of weather and many other conditions inconsistent with maintenance of good animal welfare.

It is equally evident that live export is also unacceptable to the Australian public because of the treatment of animals in overseas destinations. Consistent with this view, our recent survey, conducted by UMR, demonstrates that the majority of people polled want to see live export stopped. In our view, seeking to improve the treatment of animals in importing countries which have no culture of animal welfare is nothing more than an aspiration.

We have no doubt that Australian animals continue to suffer unacceptably both on live export voyages and during transport and slaughter in overseas countries.

We regard your present proposal to put regulation of welfare into the hands of the owners and operators of overseas facilities and functions as nothing more than a cynical exercise by those who stand to profit from this unacceptable and unethical trade. The intention is clearly to make life easier and more profitable for those with a vested interest.

Dr Sue Foster

Spokesperson for Vets Against Live Export”